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The Long-lost Mani Bible

DISCOVERY OF MANUSCRIPTS IN CHINESE TURKESTAN

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ORIENTAL scholars all over the world have fallen into the agreeable habit of meeting once in every three years in some attractive city, usually a seat of learning. These meetings go by the name "International Congress of Orientalists." The last two congresses, the thirteenth and fourteenth, took place respectively at Hamburg in Germany and at Algiers in French Africa. Both congresses were memorable for a certain shift of the centre of gravity of interest. Ordinarily western Asia and Egypt, India and Persia, hold the attention of these learned gatherings almost exclusively; at the last two meetings far-off East Turkestan, or Chinese Turkestan, decidedly held the centre of the stage.

Orientalists, as well as geographers, had not failed to note with ever-growing interest the accounts of travels in Central Asia which had taken place during the last thirty years or more. The reports of such eminent travellers and pioneers as Przevalski, Schlagintweit, Rockhill, Sven Hedin, and Klementz addressed themselves with special force to students of India, because they fairly reeked of Buddhism, and all Buddhism is Hindu. Descriptions of cities and temples, half buried in the sands of the desert in the great Tarim basin, finally aroused a degree of interest bordering on excitement in Russia and British India, and latterly also in Germany. Central Asia, especially East Turkestan, has been for some years, and is to-day, in the foreground of Oriental studies.

In 1900 the British government of India sent Dr. A. M. Stein on his memorable expedition from Kashmir to Khotan in the western part of Chinese Turkestan, not very far to the southeast of its capital city, Kashgar. At various points in the vicinity of Khotan, Dr. Stein undertook those remarkably successful excavations which are now known of all men through his own story in the very interesting book *Sand-buried Cities in Khotan* (London, 1903). Buddhist statues and frescos; votive tablets, containing pictures of Buddhist sacred history; manuscripts in ancient Hindu character, made of paper and leather; above all, many wood tablets with covers, which were used as vehicles for private and official correspondence and for legal documents—these were the objects that were easily fetched from the desert sands blown by the winds over the home of an ancient civilization.

Dr. Stein's discoveries made memorable the congress of 1902 at Hamburg; another Turkestan expedition, more than anything else, irradiated the congress at Algiers in April, 1905. In 1903 the German government sent an expedition under the lead of Dr. Alfred Grünwedel, one of the directors of the Berlin Museum of Ethnology, to Turfan, in the extreme east of Chinese Turkestan. This is the original home of the tribes whom the Chinese designated as Hiun, or Hun; the name is rendered in Sanskrit as Huna, in Greek as Χοῦνοι, and survives in English as Hun. Dr. Grünwedel reached Turfan by way of Mongolia, making this considerable city in the northeast of the country headquarters for his operations, just as Dr. Stein had operated in the southeast. Turfan—a city of about 50,000 inhabitants—may be found in lat. 43° by long. 91°, about thirteen degrees due north of no longer mysterious Lhasa, the capital of Tibet.

Dr. Grünwedel himself was not present at Algiers; the Berlin Ethnological Museum was represented by Dr. F. W. K. Müller, an eminent Orientalist of the younger generation. His Algiers address, and his printed reports concerning the

most important find at Turfan, are the base of the following statement. In the latter days of the past summer (1905) I passed several weeks at Berlin. Both Dr. Grünwedel and Dr. Müller devoted much of their valuable time to quenching my strong thirst for Turfan antiquities. Untiringly they exhibited and explained the large mass of manuscripts and archæological finds, most of which were at that time not yet prepared for public exhibit.

The expedition returned with great booty. The sand-buried ruins in the vicinity of Turfan yielded in the first place, as was to be expected, Buddhist temples full of statues, frescos, and fragments of Buddhist manuscripts. Many of these are in Berlin, being fitted for exhibition. The frescos, now set in frames of white plaster, are especially beautiful, recalling in their art, though not in subject-matter, the Pompeian frescos of the Naples Museum. But the great find at Turfan is of another sort. It consists of the enormous number of about 800 fragments of manuscripts, more or less extensive, written in an alphabet which is a modification of the Syriac script that goes by the name of Estraggelo. The modifications of this alphabet are quite serious. Some of the Syriac letters are wanting; others are modified in form; and there are also some new letters. Yet the character is unmistakably Estraggelo. It happens that the texts contain several times, for reasons which will appear later, the names of the Archangels Raphael, Gabriel, Michael, and Sarael. Now the letters needed to write these names involve little or no modification of the ordinary Estraggelo: every reader of Syriac recognizes them at once.

These manuscripts are written for the most part on paper, but one is on silk, and a few are on white kid. These last were found in old shoes, being cut into the shape of a foot, and laid on the inner soles of the shoes, so as to strengthen the foundation. They are all written carefully and distinctly, with calligraphic chapter initials. Each page, in the manner of modern books, has at the top a heading, stating the contents of the page, in yellow, green, blue, or red. Some few contain miniatures of exquisite workmanship. The lines are in general very short; this is a noticeable peculiarity of the entire collection. For instance, one of the fragments which contains the names of the angels distributes the lines as follows:

ORIGINAL.	TRANSLATION.
dêv Yaqob prêstag	the demon, Jacob the angel
Khvadâŷ Bar Sîmûs	the Lord Bar Simus
Qaptînûs qêrdagâr	Qaptinus the mighty
Rûpaêl Gabraêl	Raphael Gabriel
Mîkhaêl Saraêl	Michael Sarael
Narsûs Nastîqûs	Narsus Nastiqus

But, be it understood, the character, and that alone, is Syriac. The majority of the texts are written in a medieval Persian dialect to which the name Sogdian has been given provisionally. Quite a number are written in Turkish. Of the Turkish texts, a number are written in the variety of Estraggelo described above; but there are also others written in an Uigurian alphabet, and again others in the variety of Hindu alphabet that goes by the name of Brahmî. However, the interest of the outside world is engaged by the novel variety of Estraggelo character which may fitly go by the name of Manichean Estraggelo. For the texts are throughout of Manichean origin: *the 800 fragments are remnants of the long-lost Manichean literature.* Such as they are they contain the sole remnants of the Manichean Bible. Our knowledge of Mani and the Manicheans up to this time was at second hand: reports of Oriental writers and Christian Church Fathers.

As regards the exterior of the manuscripts, their careful script and fond ornamentation, an Arabic writer, Al-Gahiz (died 859 A.D.), states that the Zandiks, or Manicheans, "were bent upon spending dear money upon clear white paper and shiny black ink, and that they put much stress upon their beauty and ornamentation." St. Augustine, in a polemic against Faustus, the African Manichean, zealously addresses the Manicheans: "As beautiful and big and precious as your books are—burn all these parchments, together with their elegant covers exquisite with illumined leather," to wit: *tam multi et tam grandes et tam pretiosi codices vestri—incendite omnes illas membranas elegantesque tecturas decoris pellibus exquisitas.*

The fragments reveal in the clearest imaginable manner why the early Church regarded Mani, or Manichæus, as Antichrist, and thundered forth its anathemas against him, his father, his mother, and his followers. St. Augustine, in the tract just mentioned, reports that Mani in his epistles (of which he wrote many) described himself as the Apostle of Jesus Christ—*omnes ejus epistolæ ita exordiuntur: Manichæus, Apostolus Jesu Christi.* One of the Estraggelo fragments headed with the word Evangeliônîg—that is, "Gospel (of Mani)"—bears out Augustine's statement: "An Mânî Prêstag îg Yîsô"—"I Mani, the Apostle of Jesus." But this seemingly modest subordination is cancelled by all kinds of statements which ascribe to Mani the most superlative qualities and divine origin: "An angel came from the Paradise of Light, of distinguished name, elect, the God Mar Mani." Or, "I bless God Mani, the Lord, I revere thy great shining majesty."

Mani is frequently addressed as, or identified with, the Saviour: "Mayest thou come, my Saviour, life-giving God, Mar Mani, in the midst of the three sons of God!" Another time: "Mar Mani, O God, save me, O God, do thou save me!" And still more fervently: "Amen to thee, first-born Angel, God, Mar Mani, our Saviour." "He came from the Gods, Mar Mani, the God of brilliant glory, to the Paradise where the wind wafts lovely fragrance."

Other passages are of great interest because they couple the name of Mani with that of Christ in a different way, and, in fact, seem to identify them completely: "Holy Jesus, forgive my sins! God, Mar Mani, forgive my sins! Holy God, O Light, see me, O Strength, O Wisdom! O God save me!" In two other passages Christ is called "Virgin of Light," Yîsô Qanîgrôshan: the identification of this theological conception with Mani as God and Saviour is again complete: Mar Mani, Jesus, Virgin of Light, Mar Mani, create peace in me, O bearer of light! Mayest thou release my soul from this born death!" The other passage is even more ecstatic: "O Mani, son of the Gods, Lord, quickener of faith, great, elect, to thee I make obeisance! Radiant of countenance mayest thou become, Mani, Lord, life-giver! He quickens the dead and illumines the dark. Guide me, O Mani, Lord, and Virgin of Light, answer me through thy lustre! O luminous Mani, Lord of increasing glory, life-giver, protect me in my corporeal state! Jesus, O Lord, release my soul from this born death, release my soul from this born death! Glorious is thy radiant throne."

Mani, as we have seen, has the fixed name Mar Mani (Mârî Mânî in the original). Mârî is the Aramean word for "my Lord," familiar to English readers through the New Testament expression *maranatha;* "the Lord has come" (I. Cor., xvi. 22). The Mandeans, another gnostic sect, knew him by the same name, which, there transcribed in Hebrew letters, reads מארמאנא = *mâr mânî.*

Two Oriental writers, Ephraem the Syrian and Al Beruni, report that Mani came from Babel (Babylon). This is verified explicitly in a hymn of the Estraggelo manuscripts, in which Mani is made to say of himself: "Sprung I am from the land of Babel. I have come from the land of Babel to sound a call into the world." In another fragment Mani states that he is "a physician come from the land of Babel," meaning a spiritual healer. In addition to Babel, the land of Chorassan is frequently mentioned in these fragments. Chorassan is well known in Manichean tradition as the refuge and gathering-place of the Manicheans, after they were persecuted and driven out from Persia under the rule of King Bahram I., in the year 276 A.D.

In addition to the close juxtaposition, or perhaps father blending, of Jesus' name with that of Mani, Jesus is frequently spoken of as "Friend" (Persian *ariyâmân*). This combination is probably due in part to a more or less loose identification of Jesus with the Persian abstract divinity Airyama Ishya, literally "Friend of one's wishes." The complete mix-up of Christian and Persian religion, which is the most remarkable feature of Manicheism, places Jesus in other very questionable company, in addition to Mar Mani: "Jesus, O Lord, O Full Moon of growing glory! . . . Jesus, God and Vahman! Lustre, God! We praise God Narêsap, Lord Mani we will bless." The exact bearing of this passage is by

no means clear, but Vahman (Vohu Manah, or "Good Spirit") and Narêsap are Persian divinities. Elsewhere Jesus is mentioned in connection with the Zoroastrian genius of holy learning, Srôsh, and the Yazatas, or Angels. Another time he appears with the "leaders of the Mazdayasnian (Zoroastrian) faith," and yet again with Zarvan (Zrvan), a philosophical personification of "Time," quite familiar in the sacred texts of Zoroaster.

The two chief divinities of the dualistic Zoroastrian faith, Ormuzd and Ahriman, in a way hold their respective positions. Ormuzd (Oharmîzd) is the god of Good, head of the Yazatas, or Angels; Ahriman (Aharmên) the god of Evil, head of the Devils (Dêvs and Pairikâs; also the dragon Azdahag, or Azi Dahaka, the Mazanian). In the final judgment good men become "pure and are led up to the sun and the moon, and to the Nature of Ormuzd the Divine." On the other hand — again the curious mixture of Christianity and Zoroastrianism—a pious Manichean calls upon the strong Angels, the mighty, Raphael, Michael, Gabriel, and Sarael, to protect him from all tribulation, and evil Ahriman. Another passage of a polemic character has a rod in pickle for those that claim that Ormuzd and Ahriman (good and evil) are brothers. In fact, the passage attacks the Zoroastrian faith in general through its outward symbol, fire-worship: "Furthermore, also they who adore the burning fire, from that they may themselves know that their own end will be in fire. And they say that Ormuzd and Ahriman are brothers, and in consequence of this word they come to destruction." The Zoroastrian faith *(dên mazdês)* is contrasted with the Manichean religion, which is technically called the "holy religion" *(dên yozhdahr)*.

The same passage polemicises against Christianity with quite praiseworthy impartiality. And, furthermore, idolatry, which is wholly repugnant to Mani's doctrine, also comes in for a share of reprobation: "They call upon the son of Maria, the son of Adonai . . . they the wicked of rights shall go to hell, for by them themselves wickedness is perpetrated. . . . Then at the end (the final judgment) all shall come that adore idols, on yonder day, the last, and go to perdition."

Mani's hostility towards Christianity is interesting because Mani himself is identified with Jesus. It becomes even more so when we find that the Estraggelo manuscripts contain fragments of the Gospels, and that these are likely to have formed part of the Manichean canon. They are not in the exact form of the canonical four Gospels, but appear to be closest to the apocryphal Gospel of St. Peter. Students of the New Testament will regret the fragmentary character of these texts. But such as they are they are plainly authentic. The following fragments speak for themselves:

. . . In truth he is the Son of God. And Pilate (Pîlatîs) answered thus: "I truly have no share in the blood of this Son of God." The Centurions and soldiers *(qatriônân vâ istratiôtân)* then received a command from Pilate: "Keep this secret." . . . On Sunday at the call of the birds came Maria, Salome . . . they brought fragrant herbs and nard; they came close to the grave . . .

Another fragment reads thus: . . . As did Maria, Salome, and Arsaniâh (Arsinöe?), when the two Angels spake to them: "Think of the word of Jesus, as he instructed you in Galilee: 'They will surrender me and crucify me, on the third day I shall rise from the dead. . . . Go to Galilee and report to Simon.'" . . .

A long series of pieces under the title, "The coming of the Son of Man," is practically identical with Matthew xxv. 31 ff. It winds up with the words, . . . The Lord will say: "That which ye did to the pious that did ye to me."

In general the manuscripts contain, in addition to these snatches from the New Testament, remnants headed with the word Shâpûrakân, the name of Mani's most celebrated work, his Gospel (see above), his Epistles, and fragments of Manichean cosmology, hymnology, polemics, and chronology. As a specimen of this more independent literature I shall pick out the following legend, mere snatch though it is:

The King of Kings Sapores (Shâpûr of Persia, crowned in 242 A.D.) had two brothers, Meshvan, the lord, and Mihirshah by name. And he was hostile to the wonderful religion of the Apostle of

Light (Mani). He had planted a garden, beautiful, gorgeous, and vastly large, so that there was not its equal. Then the Apostle, when the hour of redemption had come, arose and stood before Mihir-shah, who was in the garden rejoicing at a great feast. . . . Then the King spake to the Apostle: "In paradise, which thou dost extol, is there perchance a garden like mine?" Then the Apostle punished this faithless speech; at once, by his might, he showed him the Paradise of Light with all Gods and divine Entities and the immortal Breath of Life. . . . Although he (the King) lay unconscious for three hours, yet what he saw he retained in his heart. Then the Apostle laid his hand upon his head, and he returned to consciousness. When he had risen he sank upon his knees before the Apostle, and seized his right hand. . . .

Mânî, or, as he is called by Occidental writers, Manes or Manicheus, was born in Babylon in the year 216 of our era. His father, Patak or Patekios, a man of strong religious temperament, joined the company of the so-called Mughtasilah, or "Baptists," a puritan ascetic sect of Gnostics in southern Babylonia. Within this community Mani received his own early religious training until his twelfth year. At that time, the legend has it, the boy Mani had already emancipated himself from this Baptist religion. An angel Eltaum brought a direct revelation from the King of Light. After this he labored for twelve years to perfect himself before publishing to the world his highly composite system. The climax of his life seems to have come in his twenty-eighth year, when he formally expounded Manicheism before the Persian King Shâhpûr (Sapores) the First. This event is narrated in Mani's most famous work, the *Shâhpûrakân*—that is, the book devoted to King Shâhpûr. He claimed to be the ambassador of the True God, the last and most perfect messenger whom Divine Wisdom had sent into the world. Just as Buddha had come to the land of India, Zarathushtra to the land of Persia, and Jesus had gone into the lands of the West, so Mani claimed to carry prophecy into the land of Babylon. In Persia, however, his religion always led a precarious existence, and he was finally, in the year 276, when sixty years of age, executed and flayed at the command of King Bahram I., because his doctrine was hostile to Zoroastrianism, the Persian national religion. The Persian priests denounced him as "Apostle of the Devil."

The religion which he founded was fundamentally gnostic, rooted in the ancient cosmology of his birth-land, Babylon. His notions of the origin and evolution of the world are fanciful and attractive, though inclining to garishness. The religion of Mani has been described as "a gorgeously glowing nature and world poem." The fundamental conception of the divine power, as reflected through the universe and in man, is light in distinction from darkness. Mani's system, gnostic at the root, is crossed with the Persian doctrine of dualism, the eternal conflict between light and darkness. Also, it has absorbed many of the minor myths and doctrines of the religion of Zoroaster. Especially the notions of the hereafter are largely Persian. Idolatry is considered abominable. The ethics of Manicheism are blameless; summed up, like those of Zoroaster and Buddha, in the triad, good thoughts, good words, and good deeds.

Through the door of dualism Christianity enters into the system. The dualistic doctrine assumes that good and evil, or light and darkness, are both primeval, but at the same time in eternal conflict with one another. Jesus is conceived as a spirit of the sun who has come into the world in order to shine upon the good creatures of light, and to remind them of their origin. Salvation depends upon Christ's doctrine as taught by Mani, his Apostle and *alter ego*. We have seen how freely Zoroastrian as well as Christian ideas are draughted into the service of Manicheism. The Estraggelo fragments show clearly that Christian and Zoroastrian influences have not been overrated by the Oriental and Occidental writers, to whom we owe our knowledge of Manicheism. On the other hand, Manicheism is by no means a Zoroastrian schism or sect, as is sometimes assumed even by scholars of high standing.

When Christian belief had overcome in the fourth century the old Greek and Roman gods, Hellenic religion, essentially still the Homeric theology, passed

into ridicule. Kingsley's novel *Hypatia* sketches well the old Pantheon's struggle for existence when already in its final agony. Ancient philosophy, especially Neo-Platonism, was a more dangerous rival. The spread of the worship of the Persian god Mithra or Mithras—he also is mentioned in the Estraggelo fragments—threatened for a time to Mithraize the world, as Renan puts it. But during its entire history the early Church encountered no more dangerous rival than Mani and his doctrines. After Mani's execution his adherents fled in large numbers to Chorassan and Turkestan, to India and even to China. On its way westward this religion passed from Persia and Babylon into Syria and Palestine; thence into Egypt and into the Roman lands along the north coast of Africa. Africa became the centre of Occidental Manicheism. In the days of Augustine it flourished there exceedingly. This illustrious Father of the Church, during nine years of his earlier life, was a believer in Mani's doctrines. Later on, disappointed, he turned to Christianity and became a bitter critic of Manicheism, and the chief champion of Christianity in its struggle against Manicheism. Augustine's above-cited tract, "Thirty-three Books against Faustus," is one of the foremost sources of information on Mani's religion. Faustus and Felix were contemporary leaders of Manicheism with whom Augustine disputed hotly; Felix professed himself convinced by Augustine's eloquence, and embraced Christianity.

In the year 930 of our era a strong Turkish tribe, the Tuguzguz, in the vicinity of China, together with their Khan, or ruler, were still adherents of Mani, though the Turks in general had become Moslems. This monarch of the Far East had occasion to threaten Abulhassan Nasr, the ruler of Chorassan, who tried to wipe out Manicheism in Samarkand, with measures of retribution upon the Mohammedans in Turkestan. A Persian writer, Kardîzî, or Gurdêzî, reports of the Tuguzguz that they assembled in the house of the Prefect daily, 300 or 400 in number, and recited with a loud voice the books of Mani. One of the Estraggelo fragments contains a Manichean prayer for a Turkish Khan, who is addressed as Tengrî Khân Kül bilgä Khân: "May the guardians and protectors, the Gods, the shining, and the Angels rejoice thee at all times! Thy throne shall gain in strength; rejoicing mayest thou live to an old age!" A Chinese inscription, found at a place called Kara Balgassun, mentions the name of Mani as Mo-ni. As late as the tenth century the Arabic historian Massudi mentions the existence of Manichean Turks in Kûsân; and a Chinese ambassador, Wang Yen-tö, speaks of "Persian" religions and their Mani temples in Kautshang. Kûsân, or Kautshang, is a town in the neighborhood of Turfan, the scene of the discoveries described in this article.

Ten days after I left Berlin, about the middle of September, 1905, Dr. Grünwedel started for a second expedition to Turfan, sustained by a grant of 83,000 marks from the German government. The prayer of all those who are interested in the history of religion and human ideas will be that he may bring with him from the heart of Asia more and fuller records of Mani and his strikingly picturesque doctrines.